

# **Life from Within: Poems by Elizabeth Madox Roberts**

## **Introduction**

*By Dr. Erin Presley and Brandi Bowlin*

*Dr. Erin Presley:*

Several years ago, Special Collections Librarian Debbie Whalen mentioned that Eastern Kentucky University had manuscript poems by Elizabeth Madox Roberts in the papers of John Wilson Townsend. As an advocate for authentic learning experiences, I started dreaming about how I could engage students with this collection. Around the same time, EKV began an Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative through our Library, and several colleagues started creating open-access textbooks. By collaborating with librarians in the archives and for OER development, I could engage graduate students with these neglected materials through the creation of an accessible resource.

In addition to engaging students with hands-on archival and publishing work, this project also introduces Elizabeth Madox Roberts to a new audience. Roberts was born in Perryville, Kentucky in 1881 and considered Springfield, Kentucky home until her death in 1941. Despite chronic health issues, Roberts was able to graduate from the University of Chicago and published prolifically in the 1920s and 1930s. Her contemporaries and predecessors, including Sherwood Anderson and Robert Penn Warren, admired her work, and two of her novels, *The Time of Man* and *The Great Meadow*, were finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. While popular and critically acclaimed during her career, Roberts is rarely taught in literature courses today. Recovering Roberts and her work for future readers has been a meaningful experience for both the students and instructor, and I am thrilled that this collection is freely available to the public.



*PA61M281: Elizabeth Madox Roberts, undated, Collection on Elizabeth Madox Roberts, University of Kentucky Libraries Special Collections Research Center. Used with permission from UK Archives.*

*Brandi Bowlin:*

To say that this project was authentic and engaging is quite an understatement. We took Dr. Presley’s dream and brought it to life, but we couldn’t have accomplished this without her continuous support and encouragement and allowing us to take this project over and make it completely our own. We began the semester by reading about archival work, open pedagogy, and open educational resources to inform our approach but quickly shifted our focus to Roberts. We read her novel *Time of Man*, a short story entitled “On the Mountainside,” and a selection of poetry outside this collection. We noticed prevalent themes of nature and Appalachian life in her work and kept these perspectives in mind when drafting our analyses, which we started about two weeks before the midterm. Our readings of Roberts’ work cultivated a deeper understanding and appreciation of Appalachian heritage and the importance of voice in an author’s writing.

This project allowed us to explore previously unpublished work from an underrepresented demographic of writers—Appalachian women. We appreciated the opportunity to engage with these materials and put them together in such a meaningful way. Working with Roberts’ poetry allowed us to explore our own voices through poetry analysis. As graduate students of English and Writing, we love poetry and literature! We loved the processes of drafting and redrafting, working in the archives, collaborating on different parts of the project (as well as taking care of our individual roles), constantly checking in with each other via group chats, recording the audio,

designing the layout, and everything else. We also loved the chance to connect with Appalachian heritage—all but one of us are from the region, and even she (from the outskirts, a very close neighbor) felt a deeper connection to Appalachia because of this course and project. I hope our readers can gain a sense of that same connection through the poetry of Elizabeth Madox Roberts. We are proud to present her work as a permanent and open educational resource, one that we have worked hard on for an entire semester, and we hope that it will reach a broader audience than ever before, gaining some of the literary attention that Roberts deserves.

[Essay Audio](#)

# The Sky

I saw a shadow on the ground  
And heard a bluejay going by;  
A shadow went across the ground,  
And I looked up and saw the sky.

It hung up on the poplar tree,  
But while I looked it did not stay;  
It gave a tiny sort of jerk  
And moved a little bit away.

And farther on and farther on  
It moved and never seemed to stop.  
I think it must be tied with chains  
And something pulls it from the top.

It never has come down again,  
And every time I look to see,  
The sky is always slipping back  
And getting far away from me.

[Poem Audio](#)



*"Boone Corner Tree on Hart's Fork." 1890s. French Tipton Papers. Image no. 2011A001-036. Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from ECU Archives.*

## About this Poem

*By Erin Gregory*

Elizabeth Madox Roberts' perspective in this poem beautifully displays her consistent focus on nature and existentialism. Ultimately, Roberts uses the sky as a metaphor and example representing time, nature, and God. The sky is constantly around us – we are always in it, and it is always changing. We are ultimately at its whim, being the constant observers of nature's pendulum of change, through which the sky is often the instrument.

This first stanza shows the speaker's awareness of their place in the world – recognizing the sights and sounds around them in this moment, leading to a specific focus on the sky. The call of the blue jay and the imagery of shadows moving across the ground help the speaker to stop and pay attention to this fleeting second in time, of which they are a part of, rather than being removed and separate from nature.

In the second stanza, Roberts describes the sky as being “hung up on the poplar tree” establishing this physical, tangible interpretation of the sky, rather than it being the very abstract and eternal presence that it is. The aliveness of the sky is reinforced through personification, as it jerks and moves away. Moreover, the speaker realizes that nature, memories, and time cannot be captured or tangibly reproduced.

The third stanza continues to grapple with this inability to capture the sky, as it continues to move further away without stopping. The speaker even surmises, “I think it must be tied with chains/ And something pulls it from the top” which opens up a more religious point of view, with a higher power being in ultimate control of the sky and the passing of time. Within the heavily Protestant culture of Kentucky and Appalachia, this sense of predestination and one’s insignificance in the face of God is surely a contributing factor to this existential line of thinking.

The fourth and final stanza ultimately captures the helplessness that all human beings experience in the battle with time. This moment is a turning point for the speaker, wherein they move away from a child-like wonder and simplistic understanding of the world, into an almost existential crisis, recognizing that the world has existed and will continue to exist without them there to bear witness. The speaker has a profound realization that they are one small part of a much bigger picture, and that one day, their own existence will be as fleeting and passively accepted as the sky passing by.

Through this image of the sky, Roberts emphasizes that, regardless of how much we may wish to capture moments or memories, it’s a never-ending and futile task. The sky will always be out of our reach – we will always yearn for more time, and more memories, but must seek comfort in each moment and find contentment and beauty in what we’ve been given.

[Essay Audio](#)

# The Woodpecker

The woodpecker pecked out a little round hole,  
And made him a home in the telephone pole.

One day when I watched he poked out his head  
And he had on a hood and a collar of red.

When the streams of rain pour out of the sky,  
And the sparkles of lightning go flashing by.

And the big, big wheels of the thunder roll,  
He can snuggle back in the telephone pole.

[Poem Audio](#)



*John James Audubon, "Pileated Woodpecker," date unknown, Postcard Collection, 1907-1987, image no. 0020-020-381, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from EKU Archives.*

# About this poem

*By Ella Johnson*

This poem demonstrates key aspects of Roberts' style; her languid syntax that forces the reader to slow down and her ability to take seemingly quaint, ordinary observations on nature and turn them into acute prose. The subject and the detail of "The Woodpecker" invite the reader to make their own conclusions about how profound the poem really is. It could simply be about a woodpecker living alone in a telephone pole. The speaker may identify with the bird and feel a sense of shared loneliness with him. The speaker could be relating to the bird's sense of 'home' as an escape from the chaos of the outside. Alternatively, Roberts could be making a larger commentary on notions of man vs. nature. The woodpecker living in a telephone pole, a decidedly man-made object that connects rural areas to the urban, creates a feeling of turning to more modern comforts as an escape from nature.

Roberts is not particularly concise with her language, creating a feeling that the lines of the poem are all running into one another. For example, "And made him a home" could instead have been "And made a home." The additional "him" serves to reinforce the idea of the woodpecker's solitary ownership, but could also be a byproduct of Roberts' regional dialect. The unfinished thought of stanza three invokes immediacy and incompleteness, like the thunderstorm is currently happening. Like the speaker, the reader must slow their pace in order to appreciate the woodpecker and the poem as a whole.

[Essay audio](#)

# Mr. Wells

On Sunday morning, then he comes  
To Church, and everybody smells  
The blacking and the toilet soap  
And camphor balls from Mr. Wells.

He wears his whiskers in a bunch,  
And wears his glasses on his head.  
I mustn't call him Old Man Wells—  
No matter—That's what Father said.

And when the little blacking smells  
And camphor balls and soap begin,  
I do not have to look to know  
That Mr. Wells is coming in.

[Poem Audio](#)



*Richmond Daily Register Negatives, 1967-1969, image no. 2012a019-006-001, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from EKU Archives.*

## About this poem

*By Jason Gibbs*

“Mr. Wells” demonstrates Elizabeth Madox Roberts ability to capture a moment with verse and description, as the poem works to recall a familiar memory for many and exemplify lasting social nuance. The poem has a youthful playfulness to the lines and subject matter, especially in the narrator's approach to various aspects of Mr. Wells.

The poem also is familiar in the sense that a lot of children tend to struggle to comply with social nuances, whether it be bluntness or the unfamiliar smell of older generations. This allows the poem to bridge the gap between its own time period and ours.

One of the most important aspects of the poem is that it is situated in its time period, though, as it focuses on those experiences that often feel so unique to a particular time period. One example

of this is the mention of Mr. Wells smelling like camphor balls, which can be compared to moth balls, although there are a variety of reasons Mr. Wells may smell like camphor, such as from using camphor cream.

Roberts' cultural representation is an important takeaway from this poem and, while many aspects of it previously discussed reflect that, few may be more important than the act of going to church. What this poem ultimately comes together to present is an image of attending church through the eyes of a young narrator whose attention is caught by an older gentleman's various quirks, a notably relatable experience culturally for a lot of people growing up at the time and since in Kentucky. Beyond that shared experience, the mere act of attending church has also been a lasting cultural norm presented in the poem by Roberts.

[Essay Audio](#)

# Crescent Moon

And Dick said, 'Look what I have found!'

And when we saw we danced around,

And made our feet just tip the ground.

We skipped our toes and sang, 'Oh-lo.

Oh-who, oh-who, oh what do you know!

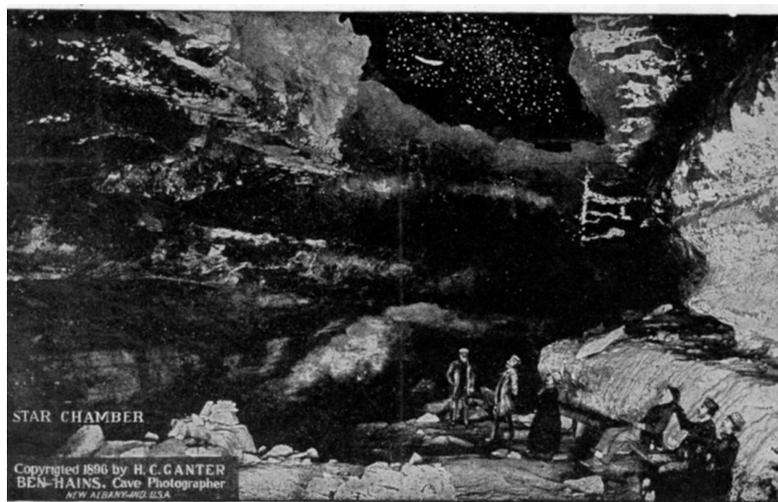
Oh-who, oh-hi, oh-loo, kee-lo!'

We clapped our hands and sang, 'Oh-ee!'

It made us jump and laugh to see

The little new moon above the tree.

[Poem Audio](#)



*Ben Hains, "Star Chamber," 1896, Mammoth Cave, KY, Postcard Collection, 1907-1987, image no. 0020-020-291, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from EKU Archives.*

# About this Poem

*By Brandi Bowlin*

This poem offers readers an intimate look into Appalachian relationships and their connection to nature, featuring two subjects with spoken lines. While much of the poem (even the title) aligns with Roberts' mindfulness and appreciation of nature, people are the main subjects. Dick and his unnamed dancing partner spend a joyous moment under a crescent moon, stepping to the tune of their own beat. Though the lines are indistinct, their song indicates excitement from observing and being a part of nature. The mere sight of the moon inspires movement and singing, urging the couple to tap their feet and clap their hands.

Dancing and singing are significant aspects of Appalachian culture. Traditional step dances, like clogging and flatfooting, require heavy percussive footwork, and the poem's dancing partners perform similarly. Songs are equally influential in Appalachia, with traditional ballads and hymns originating from immigrants of the British Isles to the region, bluegrass music permeating the culture, and church hymns enhancing religious services. These pastimes contribute to the deep bonds of the Appalachian people, bringing people together in these already small, tight-knit communities.

The moon itself is a significant symbol in Appalachian culture. Many farmers still use the Old Farmer's Almanac, which outlines moon cycles to show when best to plant and harvest crops. Other Appalachians might plan a fishing trip or wean their babies under different moon phases. The moon symbolizes change—the different phases representing the cyclical nature of life, including all of its new beginnings, growths, and transformations. It has an unquestionable power over nature, controlling the tides and serving as a beacon of light in the darkness. Though the dancers have likely seen the moon thousands of times, its majesty still evokes astonishment and delight as the dancers move in its light. They do not take their place in the universe for granted as they sing the moon's praises. This scene can remind readers to enjoy the simple pleasures in life; even a seemingly insignificant moonlit dance can bring happiness.

[Essay Audio](#)

# The Richest Woman in the World

She chops into meat with a golden knife

And cooks it in a golden skillet.

For coal she has a golden hod.

There is always a plenty to fill it.

She has some tongs made out of pearl

To poke the fire and make it burn.

She pours the milk in diamond crocks

And churns the cream in a silver churn.

And when she's tired she has a stool;

It's made of jade with pearls set in it.

She sits down here and wipes her face

And gets her breath a minute.

On Saturday she stirs the cake

With gold, and when the water is hot,

She kills the hen with a golden axe

And scalds her in a golden pot.

[Poem Audio](#)



*EKU Photo Collection. "Kitchen with a gas stove, and a table with chair." Eastern Ky Review, Vol. 20, no. 2, (Nov. 1926):31. Image no. 0001-005-classes\_home\_economics-030. Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from EKU Archives.*

## About this Poem

*By Erin Gregory*

In "The Richest Woman in the World", Roberts paints a picture of a woman doing manual labor with expensive and lavish tools. She seems to be cooking - from slaughtering her own chicken and heating a fire to baking a cake. Roberts intentionally describes all of her tools as being made of some kind of precious material, opening up an interesting conversation about class and consumption, the value of labor, and the role of women's work.

Some of the tools Roberts describes are out of use by most in our current society, but during Robert's time, they were probably a frequent part of everyday life, particularly for those in rural areas. A hod, for instance, is used to shovel coal, which was common in Kentucky households during the early 20th century as the coal industry grew. A crock is an earthenware jug used for storing liquids - as opposed to glass milk bottles, cartons, or the plastic jugs of today. A churn was used to turn milk into cream or butter, and required a lot of time and strength. So, Roberts is taking particular care to show this intensive, time consuming labor often associated with rural living and doing things the old-fashioned way - a cultural theme in Kentucky and Appalachia.

This poem could also be read as a critique of women's work within the home. This kind of domestic labor was and remains an incredibly gendered part of Appalachian and southern American culture. The woman described is cooking, and her day-long labor is far from our

electric ovens, InstaPots, and already-churned butter. It's not far-fetched to say Roberts herself may have had familiarity with this kind of domestic work. This role is intensive, never-ending, and, again, gendered. Roberts could be saying that, regardless of how rich a woman becomes, she is still subject to this expected role of unpaid domestic laborer – always expected to provide a meal.

The never-ending, repetitive nature of this work is emphasized by the order of the stanzas. The first stanza addresses cooking meat, while the last addresses killing the hen. While it makes more chronological sense for her to slaughter the hen, and then begin cooking it, ordering the stanzas in the way she has creates a sense of routine. This is something she does regularly, and there is no end to her labor. Moreover, instead of ending her poem with the third stanza, in which the character is finally having a moment of rest, Roberts ends it by beginning this cycle of labor once more.

[Essay Audio](#)

# Strange Tree

Away beyond the Jarboe house

I saw a different kind of tree.

The trunk was old and large and bent,

And I could feel it look at me.

The road was going on and on

Beyond, to reach some other place,

I saw a tree that looked at me,

And yet it did not have a face.

It looked at me with all its limbs;

It looked at me with all its bark.

The yellow wrinkles in its sides

Were bent and dark.

And then I ran to get away,

But when I stopped and turn to see,

The tree was bending to the side

And leaning out to look at me.

[Poem Audio](#)



*Roark Family Collection, 1879-1960, image no. 0010-064-12, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from EKU Archives.*

## About this Poem

*By Jason Gibbs*

"Strange Tree" contributes to one of Elizabeth Madox Roberts' broader themes seen throughout her work. Nature comes up with Roberts time and time again. When looking through her various works, especially this set of poetry, it is important to take note of the various uses of nature as a theme in her poetry.

"Strange Tree" draws upon an image of a tree. What becomes so interesting about this usage of nature, though, is her description of it. As the speaker describes being able to feel the tree looking at them, they note, "The road was going on and on/ Beyond to reach some other place." The narrator also notes the tree as being "old and large and bent." The tree is something that has been there a long time. The road went "on and on" and so had seemingly the tree's existence. And in her final lines, the narrator echoes the idea once more that the tree is looking at them.

There are a lot of valid avenues of analysis for this poem and perhaps using other poems with similar themes and information about Roberts' life can help inform analyses of this poem and vice versa. Here the tree could represent home and leaving it, especially given the context that Roberts did leave home to pursue her education among other things. And beyond that, the lines "It looked at me with all its limbs;/ It looked at me with all its bark" could suggest that the

community that the speaker is leaving behind is viewing her together. There are also alternatives, as some of the description is rather ominous. Perhaps the poem is about leaving someone behind, or maybe a bad situation the speaker was in, and that the speaker is anxiously leaving behind a “dark,” “bent” situation that they are afraid may have a lasting presence in their life even as the physical distance grows.

“Strange Tree” has a lot of potential for different readings based on the poem itself, context from others, and Roberts' life. It presents a unique opportunity for readers to dig in and derive as much and many different meanings from the metaphor as possible, and in that unique potential, the poem allows for many different connections between the reader and author to be made.

[Essay Audio](#)

# The Sun and the Birch Tree

As I came home through Howard's lane

The trees were bending down with rain.

A still mist went across their tops,

And my coat was powdered with gray drops.

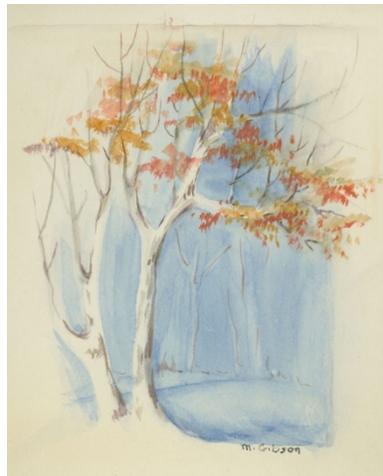
Then I looked in the woods to see

The limbs of its white birch tree.

It made a bright spot in its air

And I thought the sun was shining there.

[Poem Audio](#)



*Maude Gibson, painter, watercolor painting of trees in the fall, date unknown, Maude Gibson Collection, 1922-1964, image no. 0010-025-013, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from EKV Archives.*

# About this Poem

*By Brandi Bowlin*

Consistent with Roberts' prevailing theme of nature in her works, "The Sun and a Birch Tree" evokes an immediate sense of connection to the natural world for its readers. The speaker recalls a walk home; Roberts indicates the walk happened in the past through her switch between past tenses. This walk occurs during or after a rain shower, as the trees appear burdened with heavy rain. The speaker doesn't address any other detail of the day, just the walk home and their interactions with nature.

In each of the poem's eight lines, readers will find an element related to nature. Roberts uses these natural elements to paint an image for readers that shifts from dull and colorless to bright and promising. This transformation is evident through the light, gray drops of mist blanketing the speaker's coat and the sudden appearance of the radiant sun after the rain. The opening two couplets set an ominous tone for the poem's first half as it describes the speaker's view of trees bent by the weight of rainfall and the "still mist" on the canopy of the woods. The bending trees, the lingering mist, and the color gray all lend to this dreary feeling.

The speaker sees many trees but becomes drawn to one particular tree. When the speaker notices this tree and the spot of light shining through its branches, the poem's mood shifts to a more positive tone, revealing a sudden hope or optimism that contrasts with the gloomy beginning. The poem's structure could suggest that the speaker's mood coincides with this shift in tone—the first two couplets describe the bleak setting of a rainy walk home, and the last two couplets show a transition to an illuminated scene. The limbs of the white birch tree contrast with the gray raindrops on the speaker's coat and allow the sun to emerge in the last couplet. The speaker seems to draw inspiration from the woods, the trees, and the sun shining brightly after the rain.

The woods become personified through ownership of the trees, the light that shines through them, and the air within them. The third and fourth couplets support this association as the speaker observes its white birch tree and its air. Roberts' use of the plural "woods" but the singular possessive pronoun "its" suggests that "the woods" acts as a single entity in the poem, one that parallels or perhaps influences the speaker's emotions. A deeper analysis of the poem could suggest that the speaker uses nature to cope with internal discontent. The speaker's mindfulness of the natural world shows readers how they can embrace the times in life that bring both rain and sunshine, finding faith that a brighter outlook is coming right after the downpour.

[Essay Audio](#)

# A Beautiful Lady

We like to listen to her dress,  
It makes a whisper by her feet.  
Her little pointed shoes are gray;  
She hardly lets them touch the street.

Sometimes she has a crumpled fan,  
Her hat is silvered on the crown.  
And there are roses by the brim  
That nod and tremble up and down.

She comes along the pavement walk,  
And in a moment she is gone,  
She hardly ever looks at us,  
But once she smiled and looked at John.

And so we run to see her pass  
And watch her through the fence, and I  
Can hear the others whispering,  
“Miss Josephine is going by.”

[Poem Audio](#)



*"Unidentified Woman." Date unknown, Watts Family Papers, image no. 2017A001-0978., Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from ECU Archives.*

## About this Poem

*By Erin Gregory*

In this poem, Elizabeth Madox Roberts describes Miss Josephine, a young woman that is known for her beauty.

Robert's use of point of view creates an interesting perspective in this poem. She utilizes the collective "we" second person point of view throughout most of her poem, implying that this is a shared experience. However, in the last stanza, she uses "I", placing our narrator as part of a larger group. The "we" could be read in a multitude of ways. For example, it could be assumed that "we" is the entire town, a group of local children, a group of teenage girls, a group of teenage boys, etc. Regardless, Josephine is a topic of local gossip – reflecting the social nature of small-town Southern America. Within that collective group, there is one particular person describing Josephine – the narrator, who captures the collective sense of being enamored by this mysterious young woman.

Interestingly, Josephine's beauty eludes us – we do not know what she looks like at all. Roberts illustrates Josephine through the clothes she wears rather than the features she has. Through the

description of Josephine's clothing, we come to understand her femininity and her character. The entire first stanza uses sensory language and imagery to describe Josephine's dress and shoes, which characterizes Josephine as gentle and feminine. Her dress whispers, and her shoes are small and clean, only lightly touching the ground.

In the second stanza, her crumpled folding fan could be read as signifying a number of things – fans are often a symbol of feminine coyness or shyness, and are also associated with church in the Southern U.S.. It also adds to her mystery, as if she hides behind it and the collective “we” can only ever catch a quick glimpse of her face at a time. The same can be said for her hat of roses – it may shield her face from onlookers, making her become the roses, as they are personified instead, what with their nodding and trembling.

The sense of mystery surrounding Josephine is only heightened within the third and fourth stanzas. Her fleeting moment walking into town, or church, or wherever she is headed, creates a routine sense of excitement for the narrator and the collective we. There's even a touch of possible romance with Josephine's rare smile at John. The group running to catch a glimpse of Josephine through the fence and their whispering circle back around to the sense of a shared experience in this poem – placing Josephine on a beautiful pedestal that everyone admires.

[Essay Audio](#)

# The Hens

The night was coming very fast;

It reached the gate as I ran past.

The pigeon had gone to the tower of the church,

And all the hens were on their perch.

Up in the barn, and I thought I heard

A piece of a little purring word.

I stopped inside, waiting and staying,

To try to hear what the hens were saying.

They were asking something, that was plain,

Asking it over and over again.

One of them moved and turned around,

Her feathers made a ruffled sound,

A ruffled sound like a bushful of birds,

And she said her little asking words!

She pushed her head close into her wing,  
But nothing answered anything.

[Poem Audio](#)



*Robert Burns Wilson, painter, watercolor painting of cows and a barn, ca. 1890, Painting Collection, image no. 0020-010-005, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives. Used with permission from EKU Archives.*

## About this Poem

*By Ella Johnson*

“The Hens” shows Roberts’ tendency to reframe the ordinary natural world into a compelling drama. This poem prompts different questions and observations depending on the reader’s interpretation. For instance, the lack of a chick under the hen’s wing could reflect childlessness – but is that tragedy contained to the hen’s circumstances as livestock, or does it speak to larger themes of infertility and child loss? Hens are primarily kept for eggs, and so generally lay unfertilized clutches, contributing more to the idea of bareness. However, the hen’s calling for a chick that does not respond invites the interpretation that the chick is dead, giving credence to the idea that this poem is about child loss.

The second line of the last couplet further adds to the sense of unrest the hen feels. Up until this point the stanzas have followed Roberts’ usual paced, lilting style. Instead, the four words “But nothing answered anything” feels brief and abrupt. While still rhyming with the previous line, it is shorter and more economical in word choice, creating an ominous sense of emptiness.

[Essay Audio](#)

# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their support behind the scenes in the creation of this project:

**Bailey Lake, ECU Open Strategies Librarian**

**Kelly Smith, ECU Director of Collections and Discovery**

**Debbie Whalen, ECU Special Collections Librarian**

Without their help, this project would not have been possible.

## About Selected Images

*By Ella Johnson*

The header image of this website is a collage made out of letters and materials found in the John Wilson Townsend Papers. Housed in Eastern Kentucky University Libraries' Special Collections and Archives, the Townsend Papers mostly consist of correspondence between Townsend and Kentucky literary figures, including Elizabeth Madox Roberts. These letters offer further insight into Roberts' personality, which is invaluable since she was known to value her personal privacy. Reading these letters, one gets the sense that she took her writing career and professional identity very seriously, yet there are still hints of her sardonic wit. For instance, she describes her poor health, which often stood as an obstacle to her, as 'whimsical'.

The collage was created to remediate these materials into a creative textual and visual medium. It consists only of the related Townsend materials, and is entirely made of images digitally cut, copied, and pasted from the original documents.

Images appearing alongside each poem are courtesy of Eastern Kentucky University Libraries' Special Collections and Archives and the University of Kentucky Libraries Special Collections Research Center. Images were chosen for their aesthetic and thematic relationship to the selected poem. In choosing photos, prints, and art found within the archives, the hope is that these forgotten images and people receive new life and recognition through public enjoyment.

The rediscovery of these images placed alongside Roberts' previously unpublished material puts these works in conversation with one another, and hopefully both represents a distinctly Kentuckian identity while highlighting the importance of archival work.

## References

“Mt. Pleasant Church,” photograph, Oct. 1967, Richmond, KY, Richmond Daily Register Negatives, 1967-1969, image no. 2012a019-006-001, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives.

"Unidentified Woman," date unknown, Watts Family Papers, image no. 2017A001-0978, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections & Archives.

Ben Hains, “Star Chamber,” 1896, Mammoth Cave, KY, Postcard Collection, 1907-1987, image no. 0020-020-291, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts, 1922-1932, John Wilson Townsend Papers, 1898-1965, coll. no. 2005A001, box 12, folder 2, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives.

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EKU Photo Collection. "Kitchen with a gas stove, and a table with chair." Eastern Ky Review, Vol. 20, no. 2, (Nov. 1926):31, image no. 0001-005-classes\_home\_economics-030. Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections & Archives.

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PA61M281: Elizabeth Madox Roberts, undated, Collection on Elizabeth Madox Roberts, University of Kentucky Libraries Special Collections Research Center.

Photograph of a maple tree, date unknown, Lexington, KY, Roark Family Collection, 1879-1960, image no. 0010-064-12, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives.

Robert Burns Wilson, painter, watercolor painting of cows and a barn, ca. 1890, Painting Collection, image no. 0020-010-005, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives.